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ABSTRACT

The High School Characteristic Index (H.S.C.I.) was employed at a high school in Rochester to measure students' perceptions, as well as teachers' ability to predict students' perceptions, after black-white violence occurred in May, 1970. The 1970 results were compared with 1966 results of the H.S.C.I. at the same high school when a different student body (black-white ratio) existed. Comparison of results indicated that there was a dramatic change in students' perceptions between 1966 and 1970 in both expected as well as unexpected directions, and teachers were able to predict with fair accuracy the students' perception of their environment. Some of the major conclusions of this study were that apathy is inversely related to violence and frustration level and violence increase when black-white ratio is increased to a point where blacks are still a minority but have been exposed to middle-class values and advantages. (Author)

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REPORT ON

HIGH SCHOOL CHARACTERISTIC INDEX

STUDY AT JOHN MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL

1970

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CG 006 779

REPORT on HIGH SCHOOL CHARACTERISTIC INDEX at JOHN MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL - 1970

In March of 1970, and again in May of the same year, Marshall High School was disrupted and was in the throes of a Black-White controversy. When order was restored everyone - student, teachers, parents, community - was concerned with discovering the etiological factors contributing to the disorders. This investigator felt that a measure of environmental factors or 'press' in the high school would help establish better communications and understanding between students and faculty. As a result, the High School Characteristic Indes Scale (H.S.C.I.), developed by G. Stern, was administered in June 1970 to all 11th and 12th graders as well as to interested faculty. The following are the results of that study as compared also to those of a similar study done in 1966 at John Marshall using the same Index administered by Dr. James Mitchell, Dean of Graduate School of Education, University of Rochester.

An historical perspective is required at this point to explain the difference in student population previous to 1966 and the present student body. Previous to 1966 John Marshall's student body (N=1600) had a White to Black ratio of 99 to 1. In the fall of 1966, the Open-Enrollment plan bussed in some 200 Black students to John Marshall thus lowering the White to Black ratio 15 to 1. Historically other factors were also operating in March 1970. Two other city high schools had disruptions in February and student unrest was generally prevalent throughout the country both at the college and high school level.

The community within the John Marshall area can be characterized as being of the lower-middle socio-economic level. The majority are home-owners who are of the skilled and semi-skilled work force. The president and organizer of Rochester Neighborhool School Association lives within the Marshall area. This group with its unique educational philosophy and political goals towards integration and re-organization has many followers in this area, The school itself is located on Ridgeway Avenue in back of Kodak-Park. The John Marshall Community was,therefore, visibly sensitive and upset over the incident that occured at the school in March and May of 1970. However, to-date, no concentrated effort has been made to involve the community in establishing lines of communication about its feelings and influence on the events that occured at John Marshall High School. There is no P.T.A. group at Marshall but there is a John Marshall Community Association which this writer believes is not truly representative of the community.

Procedure: Operationally, 'press' measures the characteristic demands or features of the high school environment as perceived by the students to whom they are directed. The High School Characteristic Index (H.S.C.I.) consists of 300 items describing commonplace daily activities, policies, procedures, attitudes and impressions that might be characteristic of various high schools. There are 30 independent press scales of 10 items each, yielding an 11 point range of scores 0 to 10.

Representatives of both the Black and White Student body had been meeting in 'rap' sessions to discuss the consequences of what occured at Marshall H. S. in March and May. At one of these sessions, the students proposed canvassing the student body about their perceptions of John Marshall H. S. The purpose and format of the H.S.C.I. scale was explained to the above groups and it was suggested it be administered to all 11th and 12th graders (N=175, N=165, respectively). The H.S.C.I. scale was also presented and explained to the total school faculty who agreed on its administration to the student body. The Faculty was asked on a voluntary basis to respond (N=55) as well on the questionnaire, but to predict the 11th and 12th graders perceptions of their environment rather than their own perceptions. The H.S.C.I. scale was administered in the English classes supervised by the School Social Worker, Mrs. Williams; a guidance counselor, Mr. DeLaus, and this investigator.

The data was analyzed in a variety of ways. Students were classified by sex and grade level. Teachers were classified only on the sex variable. The differences reported between students and teachers perceptions were made on the basis of observations of 'mean' scores-no test of significance was applied.

Dr. Mitchell's 1966 study included 10 other high schools beside Marshall H.S.- all nine city high schools, one parochisl high school, and one suburban high school in the Rochester area. Dr. Mitchell's study sampled only the seniors in all of the above schools.

Major Findings: In 1966 John Marshall H.S. was perceived as being more socially stable and interested in 'non-intellectual' type activities as compared to 'intellectual' ones. There was greater student cohesiveness, planfullness, restriving after failure, ascendancy, vanity, inhibition, and greater heterosexual interests. There was less interest in the social sciences and humanities, less fearfulness, and less interest in sensory and esthetic experiences.

The 1970 student body at John Marshall H.S. could be perceived as being within the throes of social disintegration in comparison with the

1966 student population. There was less of an interest perceived in non-intellectual type activities as compared to intellectual ones. There was a greater resistance to suggestion, more feelings of unfriendliness or rejection and hostility, greater disorganization and withdrawal, more inertia, indifference, and a feeling of disorder. There was a lesser degree of striving for success or striving for power through social action, a feeling of shyness, lesser interest in the social sciences and humanities, less vanity, lesser interest in the natural sciences, and lower heterosexual interests.

The teachers that responded (N=55) out of a total N=90) in predicting the student perceptions indicated a high degree of empathy and understanding of the environmental press both by 11th and 12th graders at John Marshall H.S. Whether these teachers represented the majority of teachers at Marshall or are only those who to begin with are more empathic in their perceptions of the student body is not known. T eachers perceptions were similar to the students as reported above except for the following differences between teacher predictions and student perceptions:

1. Teachers felt students would express a greater degree of fearfulness as opposed to thrill-seeking.

2. Teachers felt students would express a greater feeling of dependency as opposed to autonomy and self-reliance.

3. Male teachers felt that students would express more restraint or placidity as opposed to emotion or expressiveness.

4. Female teachers felt that students would express a greater degree of introspection or reflectiveness.

5. Teachers felt students would express a greater interest in the social sciences and humanities.

There were some differences, though not many, among the sexes as follows:

1. Female 12th graders felt a greater degree of rebelliousness in their environment than other groups-male or female.

2. Male students indicated more tolerance than females.

3. 12th graders felt a greater degree of superstition and suspicion in their environment than 11th graders.

Implications: The'press' of a high school environment represents that which is faced and dealt with by a student. It may help students find an effective and rewarding role within the operative environment of a given institution. Administrators and teachers may see more clearly the ways in which environments need to be modified if different kinds of students are to develop most effectively within them or find maximum

identification with the goals of the institution.

This study has provided objective evidence of change that has occurred in one nigh school during the span of four years and immediately following a crisis. The data doesn't indicate whether perceptual differences were cause-or-effect relationships. Many other factors, such as societal pressures and personal history, may influence differential perceptions. It does, however, indicate a more objective approach to measuring the perceptions of a student population to their environment. Recognition that students perceive measures of press different from those of adults and that a group of adults can predict with fair accuracy the perceptions of students opens greater avenues of communication between students, teachers, and administrators for the orderly and democratic process of change.

Another implication is that apathy seems to be inversely related to crisis and disorder. The greater the disorder or crisis, the less apathy and vice-versa. Students, faculty, administration and community have been holding their breath for the last year. During the past year everything has gone 'back to normal' with little change in attitudes or preventive steps taken to avert further crisis. It would seem that a pre-requisite for change and elimination of apathy, short of crisis, is in order, on the part of all concerned -- the educational establishment as well as the community. It is the educational establishment at John Marshall that should be concerned and working toward better communication and understanding between students, teachers and administration. It is the job of the <u>total community</u> of Rochester to provide the leadership in establishing change in attitudes and better communication among its residents and not the onus of the educational institution.

Table I

1970 and 1966 School Means for the 30 Scales of the H.S.C.I.

Scale	11th graders		12th graders		Teachers		1966
	M	F	M	F	M	F	Seniors
1. Abasement-Assurance	5.50	5.18	5.50	5.85	4.51	5.14	5.31
2. Achievement	4.97	4.89	4.60	4.52	4.38	3.31	5.45
3. Adaptability-Defensiveness	4.69	4.93	4.76	5.05	4.36	4.40	5.27
4. Affiliation-Rejection	3.64	3.51	3.74	3.16	4.16	4.54	5.08
5. Aggression-Blame Avoidance	6.44	6.80	6.40	7.01	6.77	6.81	3.98
6. Change-Sameness	5.22	5.35	5.41	5.32	4.74	4.77	4.75
7. Conjunctivity-Disjunctivity	5.15	5.27	4.43	4.61	5.09	5.63	6.00
8. Counteraction-Inferiority Avoidance	5.11	5.49	5.01	5.52	5.61	5.76	6.02
9. Deference-Restiveness	4.05	4.22	4.31	3.87	4.93	4.86	4.44
10. Dominance-Tolerance	6.33	7.10	6.27	7.02	6.96	7.50	7.23
11. Ego Achievement	4.59	4.70	4.65	4.80	5.45	5.40	5.30
12. Emotionality-Placidity	5.27	5.69	5.02	5.54	4.70	5.04	5.48
13. Energy-Passivity	4.07	3.70	3.50	3.13	3.16	3.57	4.35
14. Exhibitionism-Inferiority Avoidance	4.25	4.43	4.32	4.25	4.41	4.04	5.19
15. Fantasied Achievement	4.52	4.38	4.77	4.46	4.35	4.31	4.48
16. Harm Avoidance-Risktaking	3.61	3.02	3.61	3.32	4.90	4.22	3.83
17. Humanities, Social Science	2.97	2.87	2.88	2.78	3.79	3.76	3.14
18. Impulsiveness-Deliberation	6.34	6.20	6.22	6.36	6.12	6.54	5.68
19. Narcissism	5.11	5.27	4.30	4.66	4.19	4.27	7.01
20. Nurturance-Rejection	3.63	3.62	3.65	3.46	3.61	3.85	4.62
21. Objectivity-Projectivity	5.08	5.02	4.60	4.20	5.89	5.31	5.57
22. Order-Disorder	4.33	4.33	4.24	4.12	3.90	4.09	5.45
23. Play-Work	4.83	4.53	5.11	4.24	4.83	5.13	5.51
24. Practicalness-Impracticalness	5.73	6.21	5.65	5.77	6.06	6.36	6.82
25. Reflectiveness	4.25	4.26	4.12	4.22	4.61	5.17	4.76
26. Science	4.00	3.52	3.94	3.28	4.29	4.09	4.62
27. Sensuality Puritanism	3.36	3.05	3.38	3.33	4.45	3.80	2.71
28. Sexulaity-Prudishness	6.59	7.31	6.22	6.53	6.45	7.45	7.19
29. Supplication-Autonomy	3.94	3.98	3.74	3.58	5.12	4.45	4.07
30. Understanding	4.68	4.89	4.70	4.74	4.87	4.72	5.48

Table 2

1970 and 1966 Means for the First and Second Order Factor Scores of the H.S.C.I.

	11th Graders		12th Graders		Teachers		1966
First Order Factor Scores	M	F	M	F	M	F	Seniors
1. Work-Play	18.63	18.94	18.84	19.55	17.70	16.66	15.46
2. Non-Vocational Climate	27.84	27.26	27.66	27.86	26.30	26.49	20.74
3. Aspiration Level	19.53	20.11	19.89	20.04	19.57	19.56	20.73
4. Intellectual Climate	19.78	19.45	19.85	19.53	22.07	21.76	20.56
5. Student Dignity	16.91	17.30	16.37	17.07	17.36	17.95	13.04
6. Academic Climate	6.97	6.39	6.82	6.06	8.08	7.85	7.75
7. Academic Achievement	23.98	24.24	22.24	22.52	23.11	22.99	27.30
8. Self-Expression	18.18	18.52	17.49	17.72	17.72	18.05	20.33
9. Group Life	15.90	16.04	15.89	15.25	17.25	17.24	19.03
10. Academic Organization	31.42	32.09	29.90	30.63	31.00	32.20	33.25
11. Social Form	24.59	25.45	24.09	24.43	23.95	25.15	29.64
12. Play-Work	21.37	21.06	21.16	20.45	22.30	23.34	24.55
13. Vocational Climate	22.16	22.74	22.34	22.14	23.70	23.51	29.26
Second Order Factor Scores							
14. Intellectual Climate	151.82	152.21	149.16	150.35	151.91	151.31	145.90
15. Non-Intellectual Climate	133.62	135.90	130.87	130.62	135.92	139.49	156.04

APPENDIX B

NEED-PRESS SCALE DEFINITIONS FOR THE
HIGH SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS INDEX AND STERN ACTIVITIES INDEX*

1. Abasement - Assurance: self-depreciation versus self-confidence.
2. Achievement: striving for success through personal effort.
3. Adaptability - Defensiveness: acceptance of criticism versus resistance to suggestion.
4. Affiliation - Rejection: friendliness versus unfriendliness.
5. Aggression - Blame Avoidance: hostility versus its inhibition.
6. Change - Sameness: flexibility versus routine.
7. Conjunctivity - Disjunctivity: planfulness versus disorganization.
8. Counteraction - Inferiority Avoidance: restriving after failure versus withdrawal.
9. Deference - Restiveness: respect for authority versus rebelliousness.
10. Dominance - Tolerance: ascendancy versus forbearance.
11. Ego Achievement: striving for power through social action.
12. Emotionality - Placidity: expressiveness versus restraint.
13. Energy - Passivity: effort versus inertia.
14. Exhibitionism - Inferiority Avoidance: attention-seeking versus shyness.
15. Fantasied Achievement: daydreams of extraordinary public recognition.
16. Harm Avoidance - Risktaking: fearfulness versus thrill-seeking.
17. Humanities, Social Science: interests in the Humanities and the Social Sciences.
18. Impulsiveness - Deliberation: impetuousness versus reflection.
19. Narcissism: vanity.
20. Nurturance - Rejection: helping others versus indifference.
21. Objectivity - Projectivity: detachment versus superstition or suspicion.
22. Order - Disorder: compulsive organization of details versus carelessness.
23. Play - Work: pleasure-seeking versus purposefulness.
24. Practicalness - Impracticalness: interest in practical activities versus indifference.
25. Reflectiveness: introspective contemplation.
26. Science: interests in the Natural Sciences.
27. Sensuality - Puritanism: interest in sensory and esthetic experiences.
28. Sexuality - Prudishness: heterosexual interests versus their inhibition.
29. Supplication - Autonomy: dependency versus self-reliance.
30. Understanding: intellectuality.

*Items in both instruments are so arranged that the number of the scale corresponds to the number of the first item in that scale, and every 30th item thereafter is also in the scale. For example, the items in the Affiliation-Rejection scale (#4) for both instruments are items 4, 34, 64, 94, 124, 154, 184, 214, 244, and 274. High scores in every case are associated with the left-hand term.

APPENDIX

HIGH SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS INDEX: FACTOR SCORES

1. Intellectual Climate

Eight of the eleven HSCI factors covary together to define the overall dimensions of the intellectual climate. Among them are represented the more conventional aspects of the academic program, including (a) staff and facilities, (b) standards of achievement set by students as well as faculty, and (c) opportunities for the development of self-assurance. In addition to these three, the intellectual climate is also marked, as we shall see below, by (d) non-custodial student personnel practices and (e) an absence of vocationalism.

Work-Play.*

This is an inversion of the Play-Work factor (see area 11 below). It reflects an absence of activities associated with dating, athletics, and other forms of collegiate play or amusement. Score: 40-Score Sum for Play-Work.

Non-Vocational Climate.*

This factor is also an inversion (see area 11 below). In its reversed form the items reflect opportunities to engage in theoretical, artistic, and other "impractical" activities. Other items imply an absence of expectation, coercion, or demands for student conformity to conventional values. Score: 50-Score Sum for Vocational Climate.

Aspiration Level.

A high score on this factor indicates that the school encourages students to set high standards for themselves in a variety of ways. These include opportunities for students to participate in decision-making processes involving the administration of the school and administrative receptivity to change and innovation, thus implying that a student's efforts to make some impact on his environment have some probability of being successful. But a high level of aspiration is also encouraged by introducing students to individuals and ideas likely to serve as models of intellectual and professional achievement. Score Sum: Counteraction, Change, Fantasied Achievement, Understanding.

Intellectual Climate.

All of the various items contributing to this factor reflect the qualities of staff and plant specifically devoted to scholarly activities in the humanities, arts, and social sciences. Score Sum: Reflectiveness, Humanities-Social Sciences, Sensuality, Understanding, Fantasied Achievement.

Student Dignity.

This factor is associated with institutional attempts to preserve student freedom and maximize personal responsibility. Schools with high scores on this factor tend to regulate student conduct by means other than legislative codes or administrative fiat. There is a minimum of coercion and students are generally treated with the same level of respect accorded any mature adult. Score Sum: Objectivity, Assurance*, Tolerance*.

*Reversed scores (See Need-Press Scale Definitions, other factor scores.)

Academic Climate.

This factor stresses academic excellence in staff and facilities in the conventional areas of the natural sciences, social sciences, and the humanities. Score Sum: Humanities-Social Sciences, Science.

Academic Achievement.

Schools high in this factor set high standards of achievement for their students. Course work, examinations, honors, and similar devices are employed for this purpose. Score Sum: Achievement, Energy, Understanding, Counteraction, Conjunctivity.

Self-Expression.

The last of the factors in this area is concerned with opportunities offered to the student for the development of leadership potential and self assurance. Among the activities serving this purpose are public discussions and debates, projects, student drama and musical activities, and other forms of participation in highly visible activities. Score Sum: Ego Achievement, Emotionality, Exhibitionism, Energy.

11. Non-Intellectual Climate

This area shares the Self-Expression factor with the preceding one. The highest loadings, however, are connected with three factors involving a high level of organization of student affairs, both academic and social. The remaining two factors are associated with student play and an emphasis on technical and vocational courses.

Self-Expression.

See area 1 above.

Group Life.

The four scales on this factor are concerned with various forms of mutually supportive group activities among the student body. These activities are of a warm, friendly character, more or less typifying adolescent togetherness, but the items also reflect a more serious side to this culture as represented in activities devoted to the welfare of fellow students and less fortunate members of the community. Score Sum: Affiliation, Supplication, Nurturance, Adaptability.

Academic Organization.

The various components of this factor may be regarded as the environmental counterparts of the needs for orderliness and submissiveness in the individual. High scores on this factor are achieved by institutions which stress a high degree of organization and structure in the academic environment. Score Sum: Blame-Avoidance*, Order, Conjunctivity, Deliberation*, Deference, Narcissism.

*Reversed scores (See Need-Press Scale Definitions, other factor scores.)

Social Form.

In some respects this factor represents the formal institutionalization of those activities represented in the Group Life factor. There is in fact considerable overlap between those two factors, but this minimizes the friendly aspects of the Group Life factor while stressing its welfare components. Schools characterized by this factor also offer opportunities for the development of social skills of a formal nature and in some respects suggest the finishing school counterpart of the vocational climate represented in the Vocational Climate factor below. Score Sum: Narcissism, Nurturance, Adaptability, Dominance, Play.

Play-Work.

Schools high in this factor offer opportunities for participation in a form of school life reminiscent of the popular culture of the 1920's. These are the institutions sometimes referred to as the fountains of knowledge where students gather to drink. Score Sum: Sexuality, Risktaking*, Play, Impulsiveness.

Vocational Climate.

The last of the non-intellectual factors is also shared with the Intellectual Climate area. The items of the factor emphasize practical, applied activities, the rejection of aesthetic experience, and a high level of orderliness and conformity in the student's relations to the faculty, his peers, and his studies. Score Sum: Practicalness, Puritanism*, Deference, Order, Adaptiveness.

*Reversed scores (See Need-Press Scale Definitions, other factor scores.)